

2006 Bycatch Reduction Regulations

NOAA Fisheries implemented the following regulations in 2006 to reduce bycatch and minimize fisheries interactions with protected resources. The dates listed are the dates the regulations were published in the Federal Register, not necessarily the effective dates of the regulations.

April 26, 2006—Final Rule to Protect Bottlenose Dolphins from Fishing Activities in the Atlantic (71 FR 24776). This rule implemented additional requirements designed to reduce the serious injury and death of bottlenose dolphins stock in the mid-Atlantic coastal gillnet fishery and eight other coastal fisheries.

June 19, 2006—Temporary Rule to Modify Gear Requirements in U.S./Canada Management Area (71 FR 35199). This rule required all limited access NE multispecies vessels fishing on a Northeast multispecies day-at-sea with trawl gear in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area to use a haddock separator trawl.

June 23, 2006—Final Rule to Modify Fishing Activities in the Chesapeake Bay Pound Net Fishery (71 FR 36024). This final rule required modifications to all offshore pound net leaders in an identified area of Virginia waters of the mainstem Chesapeake Bay during the May 6 - July 15 fishing season to protect threatened and endangered sea turtles from becoming accidentally entangled.

August 25, 2006—Final Rule to Require Sea Turtle Conservation Measures for All Sea Scallop Dredge Vessels (71 FR 50361). This rule required sea turtle conservation measures for sea scallop dredge vessels fishing south of a designated boundary at Long Island, NY, that is, all federally permitted sea scallop vessels were required to modify their dredge(s) with chain mat gear when fishing in the designated area.

September 21, 2006—Final Rule to Implement Amendment 13C to the FMP for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (71 FR 55096). This rule, among other things, required at least 2-inch mesh in black sea bass pots and required black sea bass pots to be removed from the water after the quota is reached. These measures were intended to reduce mortality of undersized trap-caught black sea bass.

October 23, 2006—Final Rule to Implement Framework Adjustment (FW) 42 to the NE Multispecies FMP and FW 3 to the Monkfish FMP (71 FR 62156). Framework 42 and Framework 3, which were designed to reduce fishing mortality to meet rebuilding goals for various Northeast fisheries, also included provisions to modify and standardize bycatch reporting requirements, provide incentives for the proper use of haddock separator trawls, prohibit the discarding of monkfish, and encourage the use of diamond mesh to reduce yellowtail flounder discards.

Bycatch Reduction Technology

NOAA Fisheries funds and carries out a wide variety of bycatch reduction technology projects dealing with fishing gear and monitoring technology. The FY2006 NOAA Fisheries budget included a \$2,800,000 Reducing Bycatch line, \$800,000 of which was directed toward bycatch reduction technology projects, with the remainder directed toward observer programs that monitor bycatch. The Reducing Bycatch funds facilitated several key activities and accomplishments to help reduce bycatch in 2006, including:

- Testing of circle hooks with a lower bending strength in an effort to develop a hook design that would allow the release of pilot whales in the pelagic longline fishery in the mid-Atlantic;
- Studying the feasibility of mitigating sea turtle bycatch with turtle excluder devices in the mid-Atlantic scallop trawl fishery;
- Building build three experimental scallop dredges that are being used by New England fishers to assess the effects of the new dredge design on the catch of scallops and finfish bycatch; and
- Conducting an experiment using underwater video cameras to study the behaviors of Pacific cod and Pacific halibut within trawls modified to allow halibut escape while retaining cod.